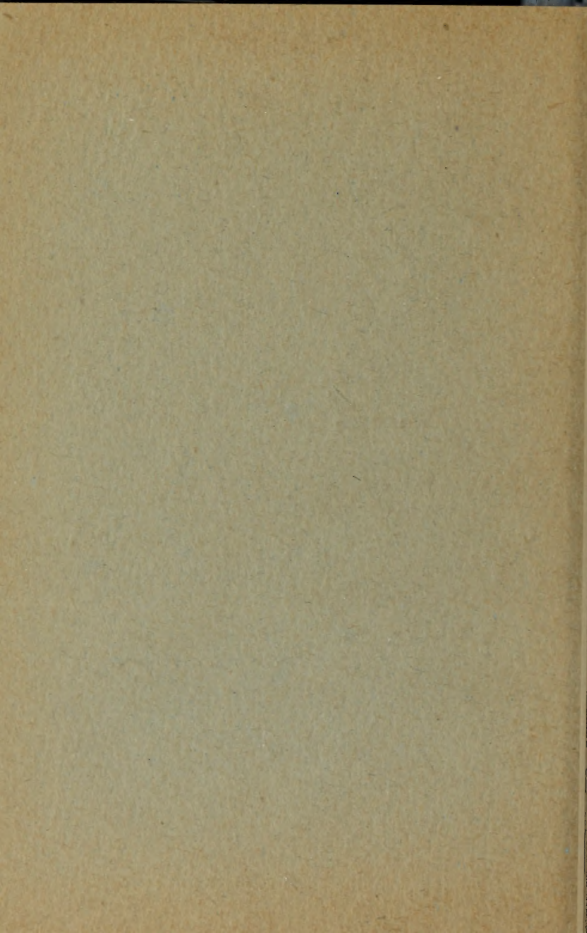


LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 829
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

Voltaire
A Lecture

Clarence S. Darrow



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WANTED—A VOLTAIRE

By E. HALDEMAN-JULIUS

America needs a Voltaire. It needs more than anything else the simple message to be cried out that is expressed in the single simple word: TOLERATION. And that single simple word, TOLERATION, should be a constant, strong, white light to pour a flood of illumination over the complex, wretched tangle of slogans, rituals, platforms and prejudices that confuse and completely overwhelm the American mind. The awful burden of formulas, of little narrow catch-phrases and catch-principles, is oppressing us to the death of all honest thought and cluttering the paths to knowledge with the unburied swollen corpses, the grotesquely animated skeletons (how sinister in their unnatural, lifeless but powerful, activity!) and the tireless dark flitting ghosts of the world's intellectual past.

We are living in a vast graveyard. Tombstones cast their blighting shadow over all our activities. We wear the ghastly hue of corpses and our step is the ghost-like, sleep-like tread of those who wander aimlessly in the midst of scenes that are mechanical and meaningless. We cannot see. We cannot breathe. We must get out of this graveyard! Out where there is air! Where there is light! Where there is brave, joyous, significant motion, and not the pale flash of the jerking limbs of skeletons!

Out into the broad highway, under the sky and sun—the road to Truth that is marked with the signposts of Toleration.

Truth—Toleration—the two are one. There can be no glimpse of Truth without Toleration for a guide. And Toleration leads inevitably to the only Truth we can know.

VOLTAIRE

Voltaire was born in Paris in 1694. At that time, Louis XIV was on the throne in France. Through long years of profligacy and dissipation the lords and rulers of France had reduced the country to poverty and the people to slavery and superstition. France was nothing but the king and the favorites of the court. Noblemen, priests and women of easy virtue were the rulers, and people lived only to furnish them amusement and dissipation. Everyone believed in miracles, witchcraft and revealed religion. They not only believed in old miracles but in new ones. A person may be intellectual and believe in miracles, but the miracles must be very old.

Doctors plied their trade through sorcery and sacred charms. Lawyers helped keep the poor in subjection; the criminal code was long, cruel and deadly. The priest, the doctor and the lawyer lived for the rich and helped make slaves of the poor. Doctors still believe in sorcery, but they administer their faith cures through a bottle instead of vulgar witchcraft. Lawyers still keep the poor in their place by jails and barbarous laws, but the criminal code is shorter and less severe.

When Voltaire was born there was really but one church which, of course, was ignorant, tyrannical and barbarous in the extreme. All creeds are alike, and whenever there is but one, and the rulers honestly believe in that one,

they are bound to be ignorant, barbarous and cruel. All sorts of heresies were punishable by death. If any one dared to write a pamphlet or book that questioned any part of the accepted faith, the book was at once consigned to flames and the author was lucky if he did not meet the same fate. Religion was not maintained by the precepts of the priest, but by the prison, the torture chamber and the fagot. Everyone believed; no one questioned. The religious creeds, while strict and barbarous, did not interfere with the personal conduct of any of the rulers. They were left free to act as they pleased, so long as they professed to believe in the prevailing faith.

France was on the verge of bankruptcy. Her possessions were dwindling away. There was glitter and show and extravagance on the outside; poverty, degradation and ignorance beneath. It was in this state and at that time that Voltaire was born. He was a puny child, whom no one thought would live. The priest was called in immediately that he might be baptized so his soul would be saved.

Voltaire's father was a notary of mediocre talents and some property, but his name would have been lost, excepting for his brilliant son. His mother was his mother, and that was all. In his writings, the most voluminous ever left by any author, he scarcely mentions his mother a half dozen times. He had a brother and sister whose names have only been rescued from oblivion by the lustre of Voltaire. No one can find in any of his ancestors or kin, any justification for the genius of Voltaire.

Had the modern professors of eugenics had power in France in 1694, they probably would not have permitted such a child to have been born. Their scientific knowledge would have shown conclusively that no person of value could have come from the union of his father and mother. In those days, nature had not been instructed by the professors of eugenics and so Voltaire was born.

In a few days, his parents and nurse grew tired of waiting for him to die, and while he was yet a child, his education was left in charge of a priest named Chateauneuf. His teacher drew a salary as a priest, but was irreligious, profligate, clever and skeptical in the extreme. He was kind-hearted and good-natured and fond of his pupil, who was also his god-son, and did his best to keep the young mind free from the superstition of the age.

Before he was ten years old, it was plain that the young Voltaire had a clever mind. At that age he was sent to a boys' school in France. His body was lean and thin and his mind was keen and active, and neither his body nor his mind changed these characteristics to the day of his death. At the school he says he learned "Latin and nonsense," and nothing else. In two hundred years, the schools are still teaching Latin and nonsense. The course of Latin is the same, but the kinds of nonsense have somewhat changed. At the school he was not like the other boys. He did not care for games or sports. While the other children were busy with youthful games he was talking with the fathers, who were the teachers in the school.

VOLTAIRE

In vain they tried to make the boy join the rest in play. He turned his eyes to his professors and said, "Everyone must jump after his own fashion." One of the professors, who was close to him, remarked, "That boy wants to weigh the great questions of the day in his little scales."

While a boy at school he began to write verses, not, of course, the easy, fluent, witty poetry of his later years, but still verses of such promise and originality as to attract the attention of his teachers. The one father who disliked him at school, in answering a brilliant retort of the child, said, "Witch, you will one day be the standard bearer of Deism in France."

On his return from school, about fifteen, his father decided to make him an advocate. He picked out the profession for his son, as most fathers do, because it was his own; but Voltaire's early efforts at poetry had given him the ambition to write and he insisted that he should not follow his father's footsteps, but devote his life to literature. This his father would not consent to. "Literature," said the parent, "is the profession of the man who wishes to be useless to society, a burden to his relatives, and to die of hunger." But even Voltaire's father could not make a lawyer out of a genius. To be a good lawyer, one must have a mind and a disposition to venerate the past, a respect for precedents; believe in the wisdom and sanctity of the dead. Voltaire had genius, imagination, feeling, and poetry, and these gifts always have been, and always will be incompatible with the practice of law. While he was studying law, he

was writing verses; verses that were wicked, sacrilegious, and sometimes malicious. He was also making up for the play he missed in youth and was having a gay time with his friends. On account of some boyish scrape, he was sent by his father to Caen and, although in a way under restraint, at once captured the society and intellect of the town. His father seeing something of the boy's brilliancy, sent him word that if he would come back home he would buy him a good post in the government. "Tell my father," was the answer, "I do not want any place that can be bought. I will make one for myself that will cost nothing." Later in his life, in writing the story of the great dramatist Moliere, he said, "All who have made a name for themselves in the fine arts, have done so in spite of their relations. Nature has always been much stronger with them than education." and again, "I saw early that one can neither resist one's ruling passion nor fight one's destiny."

Voltaire is only one illustration of the wisdom of these remarks. The usual is always mediocre. When nature takes it into her head to make a man, she fits him with her own equipment and educates him in her own school.

His father got him a post in Holland, where he wrote more verses, and fell in love, or at least thought he did, which comes to the same thing. He was forbidden to see his mistress. After various difficulties in meeting, she wisely concluded that the chances were so uncertain, she had better take someone else. Naturally this serious matter made a deep impression on

a boy. He concluded there was nothing to live for and turned more deliberately to literature for consolation. He went seriously to work and never stopped until he died at eighty-four. Had he been able to marry the girl, then—but what's the use in speculating upon that?

Louis XIV died in 1715. His reign was splendid, corrupt and profligate. The people were hungry and turbulent; the notables tyrannical and insolent. The last few years the king was the absolute monarch of France, and he was ruled by a woman and a priest. The news of his death was received with joy by the multitude. Young Voltaire was at the funeral. This funeral resembled a fete more than a day of mourning.

Voltaire by this time was known for his epigrams, his rhymes and his audacity. The salons of Paris were at once opened to him. Whatever else he was during his life, he was never dull, and the world forgives almost anything but stupidity. Commencing early in his life, most of the epigrams and brilliant satires in France were charged to Voltaire. On account of a particularly odious epigram, he was exiled to Sully. His keepers found him a most agreeable guest, and he was at once a favorite in the society of the place. "It would be delightful to stay at Sully," he wrote, "if I were only allowed to go away from it." He spent his time hunting, flirting and writing verses. In his verses and his epigrams he could flatter when he thought flattery would accomplish his end, and by this means his exile was brought to a

close and he returned to Paris after an absence of about a year.

No sooner was he back, than a violent attack on the government appeared. This was at once charged to Voltaire, who had in fact not written it. During this time he had been writing his first play, which had been accepted and was then on rehearsal at the theater, but on account of the anonymous verses, which he did not write, he was sent to the Bastile. A few days after he was placed in prison he signed a receipt for "two volumes of Homer, two Indian kerchiefs, a little cap, two cravats, a night cap and a bottle of essence of cloves."

It was some time before he was given a pen and ink, which all his life he needed more than anything else; but without these, he began to compose a new play. He was able to carry in his mind whole cantos of the play and, as Frederick the Great said, "His prison became his Parnassus." Voltaire was not the first or last man to convert a prison into a hall of fame. A prison is confining to the body, but whether it affects the mind, depends entirely upon the mind.

It was while in prison that he changed his name from the one his father gave him—Arouet—to the one he has made famous throughout all time—Voltaire. He said, "I was very unlucky under my first name. I want to see if this one will succeed any better."

His verses soon won him the clemency of the regent, who wrote him, "Be prudent and I will provide for you." Voltaire answered, "I shall be delighted if your highness will give me my

board but beg that you will take no further trouble about my lodging." In a year he was released, but whether in prison or surrounded by the gayest court in Europe, he was always forging his keen, witty, malicious darts against the enemies of truth and liberty.

When Voltaire was twenty-four, his first play "Cedipe," was produced in Paris. His verses and epigrams had already made him famous throughout the capital and a packed house made up of the intellectual and important people of Paris greeted the play with wild enthusiasm. It ran for forty-five nights, and at once made Voltaire famous as a playwright; which fame was with him to the end. This play, together with his earlier works, got him a pension, but the pension did not succeed in keeping his mouth closed, as is generally the case. Pensions are the favors of the powerful, and dangerous to any great intellect. It is only here and there down throughout the ages that a Voltaire is born who does not fall a victim to their blandishments. Not only pensions, but what the world calls good society, was always open to Voltaire. He needed but to obey the mandates of the rulers to live as the pampered child of luxury and ease, but this Voltaire always refused to do. He went his way writing his plays, making his epigrams, reading his verses, witty, audacious and heterodox, dodging officers and jails, doing his own work, flattering those whom he despised, managed to keep out of jail most of the time, and died at the old age of eighty-four.

Much of his work he did while confined to

his bed. He was always an invalid, always obliged to take great care of himself, living constantly with death just before him, never idle a moment for fear his work would not be done. Probably no man ever lived who assailed the Church and the State with the same wit and keenness that was always at Voltaire's command; and yet in spite of this he managed to live comfortably, accumulate riches and die in peace.

Voltaire with all his other talents was a business man. For this he has been criticised by biographers and enemies. While he was ever generous to his friends and ready to give his time and money for an unpopular cause, he constantly haggled and dickered over business matters and seldom got the worst of any trade. No iconoclast can possibly escape the severest criticism. If he is poor he is against existing things because he cannot succeed. If he is rich, he is not faithful to his ideals. The world always demands of a prophet a double standard. He must live a life consistent with his dreams, and at the same time must obey the conventions of the world. He cannot be judged either by one or the other, but must be judged by both. In trying to live up to both standards, one invariably misses both. It is hard to be true to the two, especially when the standards of the new and the old are in conflict. The ravens should feed the iconoclasts, but they don't.

Voltaire loved the good things of life. He loved society; he loved the witty and intelligent; he loved fame; and he was singularly vain. He loved the society of the courts of

Europe. He spent many days at the magnificent courts of France, adapting himself the best he could, but at the same time seeing through its shams, despising its vanities, its cruelties and its injustice to the poor; but he must do his work, and to do his work in France two hundred years ago, he must have the patronage of princes, of priests, of kings and influential courtesans.

Writing from the court of Louis XV, he says, "It is a dreadful bore to be here, but it is very advantageous—the cage is so exquisitely gilded that one must try not to see the bars through the gold." For another of his brilliant sayings he was thrown into the Bastille for a short time in 1726. He was pardoned on the condition that he go to England. No sooner had he reached that island than he was at once received by the poets, philosophers and statesmen of England. Swift, Pope, Young, Gray and Walpole were then shedding their lustre on the British isle. Newton was dying and Locke, though dead, had just begun to speak.

Voltaire at once threw himself into the life of England. Here he found a land where one could write and speak and publish his honest thoughts. Here he felt that he had reached the "promised land." He was everywhere received by the intellectual spirits of England, and within six months he was master of the English tongue, and all the rest of his life could read and speak that language almost as fluently as if native born. Here he met the Quakers, studied their religion, and was captivated by their simplicity and their tolerance.

"What! you have no priests?" said Voltaire to the Quaker. "No, friend," he replied, "and we get along very well without them."

Voltaire was an admirer of the English and their land. He found "greatness without insolence and without Bastiles." "It has taken seas of blood to drown the idol of despotism, but the English do not think they bought their laws too dearly." When he was an old man he said he once lived in a land "where a professor of mathematics, only because he was great in his vocation, had been buried like a king who had done good to his subjects." He spoke of Locke as the "wisest of human beings." "The catechism reveals God to children, but Newton has revealed him to sages." "Locke dared sometimes to speak positively, but he also dared to doubt." "I love people who say what they think. We only half live if we dare only half think." "What would you have done had you been born in Spain?" asked Voltaire's secretary. "I would have gone to mass every day, kissed the monk's robes and set fire to their convents."

Voltaire's residence in England made a great impression on his future life. He seemed to dedicate himself anew to the great cause of human liberty. He felt that it was for him to destroy oppression, superstition and tyranny. He never ceased to fight for the cause as long as life remained.

After three years in England, Voltaire managed to get permission to return to Paris. He set to work to write another play and to organize a company to act it. During all his

life he was passionately fond of the stage, writing plays on every subject, ancient and modern, plays which always held keen thrusts against the injustice of the world. He was busy organizing companies to produce his plays, constantly associated with actors; in his later years he built a theatre of his own at Ferney and frequently took part on the stage in his own plays. In those days the business of an actor was more despised than it is to-day. Actors were servants of the rich, men and women who contributed to their pleasure for the purpose of satisfying their idle hours. Everybody went to the theatre, but no one had any regard for those who performed a part. While the king might sit in a box, the dead player could not be buried in consecrated ground.

Soon after his return to Paris, Adrienne Lecouvreur died at the age of thirty-eight. She was the greatest actress of her time and her death made a profound impression upon Voltaire. He had known her in her younger years; had been her friend and admirer up to the time of her death. She was a woman of genius and intellect. She was taken with a fatal illness while playing one of Voltaire's plays. Voltaire hastened to her bedside. She died in his arms, in agony for which the doctors of that day could furnish no relief. Her fame and her fate made a profound impression in Paris at the time.

In her death she could have neither priest nor absolution; was denied Christian burial; taken out of the city at night and "thrown in

the kennel" like a dog. It was said of this brilliant woman that "she had all the virtues but virtue." Whatever she was, her life had been no worse than the paramours, friends and mistresses of the kings and nobles over whose graves priests had pronounced eulogies and benedictions, and who had been laid in consecrated ground; but her intellect, her genius, and her heart were far above all these. For a time Voltaire forgot to be a cynic, but was touched to the soul by the injustice of the French law, French society and French religion. He had been, he said, "her admirer, her friend, and her lover." "Shall I ever cease to see," he wrote, "the light-minded Frenchman sleeping under the rule of superstition?" Is it only in England that mortals dare to think? Men deprived of burial here to whom Greece would have raised altars! In London she would have a tomb among geniuses, kings and heroes. Ye gods, why is my country no longer the fatherland of glory and talent?"

During the rest of his life he worked tirelessly to improve the condition of the actors of his day. Even as an old man he could never forget the injustice done to this great woman. "Actors are paid by the king," he said, "and excommunicated by the church. They are commanded by the king to play every evening and by the church forbidden to do so at all. If they do not play, they are put in prison. If they do, they are spurned into a kennel. We delight to live with them and object to be buried with them. We admit them to our tables and exclude them from our cemeteries."

Even in old age, singularly enough, his greatest dread was that he might be thrown into the gutter after his death.

There was no field of literature that was not open to Voltaire. A poet, an essayist, a writer of plays, a historian, a novelist, a scientist, a philosopher. He tried them all and excelled in all. His histories were as brilliant as his plays. He understood, as well as any man who ever lived, the difficulty that besets the author who would write history. "Whoso writes a history of his own times," he says, "must be expected to be blamed for everything he has said and everything he has not said."

His *English Letters* had been prepared in England and after his return to France. These, he knew, were too dangerous to be published in Paris. He was saving them until it might be safe. Somehow they were stolen and appeared in 1734. These letters contained studies of the great English philosophers and comments on life, which were modern then and are still modern. The truth is always modern and there never comes a time when it is safe to give it voice.

The publisher of his *English Letters* was thrown into the Bastille, the book was denounced and publicly burned in Paris by the hangman as "scandalously contrary to religion, morals and society," but still Paris was not so old-fashioned. Men are constantly thrown into prison today in America for publications which are "scandalous" and "contrary to morals and authority"—publications which tell

the truth, and which are condemned simply because they tell the truth. Voltaire's house was searched, but he got the news in time and once more fled to save his liberty and his life.

There is no parallel in history for this great genius. Born in Paris, placed in the Bastille for audacious writing at eighteen, driven to Holland, to England, Prussia and the far off provinces of France. All his life he loved Paris, and although he died at an advanced age, probably five or six years would cover all the time that he lived in Paris during his mature life.

Voltaire could not keep out of trouble. Almost every person of importance was his enemy at some period of his life, but he was not a nonresistant. He never turned the other cheek. When he was attacked, he replied with pamphlets and epigrams more poisonous than those any other author ever penned. Whenever he was at peace, he was uneasy to be at war. If his critics and traducers let him alone for a time, he was busy writing some pamphlet, poem or play to get himself into trouble once more. He seldom signed his own name to the production of his pen. More than one hundred names were used by Voltaire in the course of his long literary career, but whatever the name and whether written by him or not, if especially bitter, mocking, rebellious or ungodly, it was always laid to Voltaire; and whatever the utterance that made the trouble, whether it was his or not, Voltaire was ready to deny that he was the author.

Most of his pamphlets and many of his more

pretentious works he promptly denied. He did not write the pamphlet or the poem. He did not write the essay on Natural Rights. He did not write the attack on priest or king. He did not write the Philosophical Dictionary. He had nothing to do with the Encyclopedia. He wrote only words of flattery for the king and nicely turned stanzas for the women of the court. He sometimes condemned his own books and was present in the crowd to see them burned, but no doubt most men would have preferred to deny the pamphlets than to have been burned with them. It is idle to speculate whether a man should or should not have done this or that. No doubt some men would have been burned with the first pamphlet that they wrote, but not Voltaire. He preferred to live to an old age and dodge and flee and deny and lie and still pour forth upon the world the greatest mass of rebellious literature that ever came from the pen of man.

Voltaire fled from Paris when the *English Letters* were published. He fled to a distant part of France. From there he went to live on an old estate with Madame du Chatelet and her husband. The husband was an army officer and seldom at home, and of very little consequence when he was. Madame du Chatelet was one of the most remarkable women of her age, or any other. Brilliant and learned, she loved pleasure and she loved work. No book was too deep for her understanding. She was a mathematician, an astronomer, a philosopher and a woman. Voltaire was forty

years of age when he fled from Paris to the estate of Madame du Chatelet and his life and fortunes were bound up with her for sixteen years. The estate was old and dilapidated and in a barren and dreary part of France, but with his industry and his money, he made it a place of beauty sought by the greatest people of Europe.

Madame du Chatelet was not a housekeeper. She never swept the floor or dusted books or knew how to cook a meal or to see that anyone else did it. She was intellectual, and no woman ought to expect to be intellectual and a housekeeper too. She was difficult, irascible, and voluble. Voltaire was impressionable, sensitive, quick tempered. They kept each other very much entertained. Sometimes they loved, often they fought, but still they seemed to find each other necessary for their work. Together they studied astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, history and religion. Together they visited nobles, princes and courts, perhaps "the most brilliant pair in France" of that day. No doubt after some years, the tie between them grew galling to Voltaire, and perhaps to Madame du Chatelet, but it had grown to be a habit. Had they been married, they would probably have gotten a divorce; but as they were not married, they could not be divorced and stayed together.

Voltaire was particularly blessed by two women, Madame du Chatelet, at whose estate he lived for sixteen years, and Madame Denis, his niece, who kept his house near Geneva for more than twenty-five years. Neither of

them gave him a moment's peace, and forced him to flee to his study for consolation and rest. If either of these women had made his life comfortable his great work would probably never have been done.

There are two things that kill a genius—a fatal disease and contentment. When a man is contented he goes to sleep. Voltaire had no chance to be contented, and so he wrote eternally and unceasingly, more than any other man in the history of the world. Toward the end, the relations of these two grew galling in the extreme, until finally Madame du Chatelet transferred her affections to a young army officer who lived in the house, a protege and friend of Voltaire. Soon after she died and Voltaire was without a home.

While Voltaire was living with Madame du Chatelet in the far province, he was always yearning for Paris. Scheming, conniving, urging his friends to get him the right to return. "I will declare that all priests are disinterested; that the Jesuits are honest; that the inquisition is the triumph of humanity and tolerance. In fact I will say anything they like if they will but leave me in peace."

During this time there was growing up that deep and weird friendship with Frederick the Great. Frederick was then a prince, but would one day be king of Prussia. He was skeptical, tolerant and filled with humane thoughts. He hated war, he loved learning, he appreciated Voltaire and, with his keen insight, set him down as the greatest man in Europe. The letters between the two were voluminous and

continued through all sorts of difficulties and quarrels to the time of his death. Frederick addressed him as "dearest friend," "charming, divine, Voltaire," "sublime spirit," "first of thinking beings." To Voltaire Frederick was "Marcus Aurelius," "the star of the North," "not a king among kings, but a king among men." Frederick replied that his "whole creed was one God and one Voltaire." For a long time they worshiped each other at a distance, which is always a safe way to worship. Frederick constantly urged Voltaire to come to his court, but Madame du Chatelet was in the way. She was extremely jealous. For a long time she kept him from making the journey. Frederick urged him to come, so he arranged to take Madame du Chatelet with him. Frederick replied that he could bring her if he wished, but he preferred to have him come alone. Finally, with great reluctance, Madame du Chatelet granted him a leave of absence and he made the journey.

The king and Voltaire were fascinated with each other for a time. Voltaire corrected Frederick's verses, helped him about his French, entertained him and his brilliant company, swapped compliments with him, and was the life of his court; but all geniuses are difficult, especially when more than one is present at the same time. Genius cannot be confined to narrow limits or to fixed conventions even though they are the limits and conventions of another genius. Their friendship grew strained and Voltaire went away, went back to Madame du Chatelet; but still

they continued to write. With the long distance between them, Voltaire was the greatest man that ever lived and Frederick the greatest prince on earth. Both Frederick and Voltaire hated war. Both of them believed that there was something better for men than to kill each other. Voltaire looked for great things from Frederick when he should become king.

About the first act of his reign was to declare war. Somehow the king business looked different to him when he was the king. Voltaire could not understand it. He was shocked and grieved and wrote and pleaded with Frederick to abandon war and follow his instincts for peace; to build up a great kingdom dedicated to liberty, to humanity, to justice for all.

Voltaire made no concealment of his disappointment with Frederick's acts and his changed views, but still they were friends. Through many years they wrote constantly to each other, letters on philosophy, literature, religion, life, morals and war; but still Voltaire stayed on at Madame du Chatelet's estate.

When Voltaire was fifty years old, Cardinal Fleury died. He was a member of the French Academy and Voltaire wanted his place. What the membership could do for Voltaire, is hard to understand, but no one likes bubbles and trinkets and decorations as do the great. Voltaire set himself to work to get this place. Madame du Chatelet helped. He must have the king and to get the king he must have his favorite mistress, who at that time was Madame du Pompadour, but neither could do anything without the pope. So Voltaire set to

work, first, on Madame du Pompadour. He wrote her verses. One of the poems begins:

"Every grace and charm and art,
Pompadour, in you is found."

Of course she "fell for it." She got the king on his side. Then he started for the pope. Voltaire never did anything half way. If he wanted a thing he went after it. He was always afraid of doing too little, but never afraid he was doing too much.

He had already written his play "Mahomet". This of course had been pronounced sacrilegious and profane and had been consigned to the flames. Still he thought the pope did not fully understand the play. He wrote long letters to people in society to prove what a good Christian and church man he was, but he did not succeed in deceiving any one. The Academy could not accept him as a successor to a cardinal, but England elected him a member of the Royal Society. Germany placed him in her Hall of Fame. Everybody recognized him but France. Still he was not satisfied. Then he started a still bolder campaign to mollify the pope. He read all his works, complimented him highly and thereupon the pope called him his "dear son" and sent Voltaire his "blessing". Then he wrote the pope asking permission to dedicate to him his play "Mahomet," and although it had been burned as sacrilegious, the pope consented. The pope doubtless thought it would be better to have Voltaire his friend than his enemy, so he sent Voltaire his "apostolic benediction" and accepted the dedication

of "your admirable tragedy". Voltaire replied that he "laid the work against the founder of a false religion, at the feet of the chief of the true religion". He flattered the cardinals and went into ecstasy over the pope's virtues.

With Madame Pompadour, the king and the pope at his back, he could not fail. Another vacancy occurred a few years later and Voltaire, at the age of fifty-two, was admitted to the French Academy, long after he had been admitted to almost every other great society in Europe.

It was the custom of the new members to read a paper, so Voltaire read one to the Academy. At once he became Voltaire. The paper was witty, audacious and sacrilegious. It offended all the august personages who heard and read it. They regretted that he was a member of the Academy, but it was too late. They should have known before that such a leopard could not change its spots. Again he was chased from the court. Again he went to Madame du Chatelet.

When Madame du Chatelet was really dead, Voltaire was overwhelmed with grief. During all their years together, Voltaire had held her in unbounded admiration. Thirteen years before her death, he had given her his portrait engraved with these lines:

"Baviez 'graved this likeness for you,
Recognize it and his art.
As for me, a greater master
Has engraved you on my heart."

The death of Madame du Chatelet sent him adrift in the world.

He had enemies and spiteful critics throughout France. "To sit high is to be lied about."

Frederick the Great saw his opportunity. He still loved Voltaire. He loved him with an affection that although often rent and clouded by doubts and discord, remained with him to his death. He besought Voltaire to come to Berlin. He offered him honors and a pension, decorations and the society of the wise and great. Voltaire, with no one to deny him, could not resist and went. He reached Berlin in the midst of a great public fete. The populace forgot the king and worshiped Voltaire. The king took him to his palace at Potsdam, fitted him a suite of rooms in royal state and made him his constant companion. All of the king's literary productions he turned over to Voltaire for correction and revision, and after they left Voltaire's hands, they did honor to any prince. But it is not wise for even the closest affinities to be kept constantly together, especially if these affinities are brilliant.

Again a coldness arose between Voltaire and Frederick. In the meantime Voltaire entered into a business speculation which resulted in a law suit, bringing scandal on the court. The breach between them widened until they could no longer stay together. After about three years, Voltaire precipitately fled from Berlin. He fled because he feared arrest. He made his way with all haste to the German frontier, but before he crossed the line, the agents of the king placed him under arrest. He was detained

several days, mainly to get from him the manuscript which Frederick had written while a prince and which severely attacked the Christian religion. It was all right while he was a prince, but would not do after he became a king. Still the world is not so much changed and even Mark Twain in his later days wrote a vigorous attack on Christianity, which he printed for private circulation alone.

Voltaire was soon permitted to go on his way, but he felt humiliated and outraged by the man who had been his friend. Voltaire never saw Frederick the Great after his flight, but they still had the old yearning for each other. Letters were exchanged almost as frequently as before and Frederick the Great paid him one of the noblest tributes at his death. The three years he lived at Berlin produced less than any other part of Voltaire's active years. Too much gayety, too much society, too much admiration, too many quarrels. The genius was for a time reduced to the man. Voltaire himself felt that he had practically wasted the years. He appreciated its tragedy and likewise its comedy. He could laugh at either tragedy or comedy. All his life he could joke and with him there was no subject too serious for a comedy. Voltaire said, "It is because one can be frivolous that the majority of people do not hang themselves." He has often been criticised because he could joke. The ordinary mind cannot understand that a serious purpose and a sense of humor can go together. It is only the sense of humor that can keep a man alive for the serious purpose. The world has never been able to distinguish

between stupidity and seriousness. If the stupidly serious really had any humor, they would die from laughing at themselves.

Voltaire spent a short time traveling through various parts of France, fearing to go back to Paris, and then turned to Geneva. Geneva was then an independent state, afterward annexed to France and later to Switzerland. His flight from Prussia and refuge in Geneva marked a new era in his life. He was sixty years old when he reached this little state. He had been sobered by age and experience. He had learned much of the follies and frivolities of the world. He knew that after all, his was a serious life and his work the greatest ever undertaken by man in any age. He seemed to take new vows to the service of the great cause which was really the greatest of his life, the cause of liberty. From that time on, he was tireless, unremitting, and brilliant in that cause. Wherever he found superstition, injustice, tyranny, and cruelty, Voltaire placed himself in the arena ready for the fray. Whether his work was history, poetry, drama, novels or pamphlets, it was the same. Probably all his works will never be brought together. His pamphlets were numberless and these pamphlets, more than his more pretentious works influenced France and his age, and through them destroyed old institutions and customs and barbarities and prepared the world for the toleration and liberty that will some day come.

When Voltaire went to Geneva, that state was still held in the mental paralysis of the doctrines of John Calvin. It was two hundred

years since Calvin had piously burned Michael Servitus for the crime of thinking in place of believing. While Calvin had been dead almost as long, the spell of his genius and fanaticism still held the land. Geneva was obsessed by a strange idea—an idea as common now as then—a belief that in spite of civilization, science, philosophy and experience, will not die: the doctrine that men can be changed and made perfect by human laws. The Geneva laws fixed the time at which people should go to bed and get up in the morning, and of course both hours were early; fixed the kind of drink and food and the amount and quality that was proper for a man to take. It regulated the religious creeds and social customs. No matter what one wished to do, he could find out whether it was right or wrong by consulting the statutes of Geneva.

The same obsession rules the human race today. We have changed the diet, the religious, and moral code, the social code, the social customs, but not the fundamental idea that the state should tell us what to do and especially what not to do, and that to disobey is to be a criminal, punished, outlawed, and reviled. Today when the statutes are not sufficiently severe to satisfy the mob, "Mother Grundy" takes up the work and reviles and persecutes and maligns with all the brutality, insolence, cruelty, and ferocity that marked the inquisitors of the ancient world. Of course, theatres and play acting were wrong in Geneva when Voltaire fled from the court of Frederick the Great, but there were two things that Voltaire always de-

terminated to do. He was bound to fight hypocrisies and shams and the cruelties of the world, and he was bound to live.

He soon purchased two estates about three miles from Geneva, in the territory of France. He was near enough to Geneva so he could build a theatre of his own and the people could come across the border to see his plays and the barbarous laws of Calvin could not forbid. He was near enough to the French border so he could flee to Switzerland or Geneva whenever the king of France should determine to send him to the Bastille. The estate where he spent the greater portion of his remaining life, he called Ferney, almost on the shores of the beautiful Lake Geneva, with Mont Blanc and the other Alpine peaks in full view, the clear sky and the snow capped mountains almost above him, and the green fields of France and Switzerland around him—an ideal spot in which to live and work and dream. It was not for its beauty that he chose this spot. The love of natural beauty never entered the soul of Voltaire. He knew or cared little for art and nothing for nature. Had he lived today, the spacious, elaborate steam-heated flat would have been his idea of a home. Voltaire traveled all over Europe, but never halted to see a beautiful picture, classical statue, grand cathedral, or any scene of great natural beauty or sublimity.

These estates were old and dilapidated and Voltaire set to work to improve them. He commenced cultivating the soil, planting trees, building a house. He hired gardeners, farmers and servants without end. He seemed to know

how to turn his mind to agriculture, as well as to writing plays and pamphlets. Like most other philosophers, poets and dreamers, he at least said that he thought agriculture was the one thing worth while. Probably like others, he did not mean it. "I have only done one sensible thing in my life," said Voltaire, "to cultivate the ground. He who tills a field, renders a better service to mankind than all the scribblers in Europe."

"You have done a great work for posterity," said a friend one day. "Yes, Madame, I have planted four thousand feet of trees in my park." While many literary men have been farmers, very few of them have made it pay, but Voltaire made it pay. Had he been more religious and less versatile, he could have been the Pierpont Morgan of his age.

Later at Ferney he developed other industries. He imported the silk worm and manufactured silk. He had a large watch factory and the town became a prosperous industrial place. The colony was well paid and satisfied. Workmen sought jobs from all parts of the land, as refugees fled to him for shelter. But still neither farming nor manufacturing was his real work. His pen was never idle.

For years he had been working on a dramatic poem, "Pucelle." It had been read in all the societies of Europe, but never published. It was wicked and ungodly. Women read it in the boudoirs, but not in the parlors. Men kept the copy out of their library, but had it in their private collection. The book was an open secret throughout Europe. Voltaire had always used

every means to keep it from the publisher, but his manuscripts were constantly disappearing. His friends and private secretaries were stealing them and selling them. Most authors have hard work to find publishers. Voltaire had hard work to keep publishers from printing his books. One day a publisher called on Voltaire and offered to sell him a copy of his own book, "Pucelle." He at once said he did not write it; that it must have been the work of some person who had neither poetic art, good sense, or good morals. He denounced the publisher to the Geneva authorities; but it had escaped the printer in Paris, where everyone was reading it. The authorities burned it and a Parisian publisher was sentenced to nine years at the galleys for printing an edition. Geneva pretended to believe Voltaire's statement that he was not its author and Geneva burned it too. At the same time, Paris was going mad over his other plays, which were attracting crowds at the theatres. The work was everywhere received with applause, but the author was condemned to exile.

On November 1, 1755, Lisbon was destroyed by an earthquake. The news reached Voltaire and stirred him to the soul. Thirty thousand people were destroyed almost in the twinkling of an eye. The earthquake was on All Saints day and the greatest loss of life was in the cathedrals and churches of the place. For months, all his letters contained allusions to this catastrophe, which took possession of his mind. "The best of all possible worlds! If Pope had been there, would he have said, 'Whatever

is is right?" 'All is well,' seems to me absurd, when evil is on land and sea."

Voltaire wrote a searching poem on the problems of life, entitled "The Disaster of Lisbon." At the same time was published his poem on "Natural Law" covering the eternal questions as to the meaning, plan, scheme, and end of all. Voltaire answered these questions as all other thinkers have ever answered them, that upon these subjects man has no guide and no light. But the churches and the authorities read, or at least heard of these two poems. They were promptly burned in Paris and pious Genevans held up their hands in horror at the theology, or rather lack of theology which they taught. But the Lisbon earthquake shocked the world. Even the king of France had serious thoughts, so serious that he caused the private entrance to Madame Pompadour's apartments to be closed and made her a maid of honor to the queen.

About this time, an unfortunate lunatic named Damins made a weak attempt on the life of Louis XV. The orthodox in church and state said that plainly the act was inspired by the New Thought of that day. It was perfectly easy to trace the act of a crazy man to the writings of Voltaire, which the man had never read. True, when the man was captured, he had in his hand a copy of the New Testament. Voltaire was delighted when he got this news. "A testament? I told you so. All assassins have a Bible with their daggers, but have you ever heard of one who had a Cicero, a Plato, or a Virgil?"

The assault on the king threw politicians and statesmen into panic all over Europe and at once they began to make the penal code more barbarous, the prohibitory laws stricter, and the censorship of the press more complete. There was but one way to deal with the act of a crazy man and that was to persecute and torture thousands of innocent ones.

This was two hundred years ago, but every penal code in the United States has been made more savage and barbarous and the people, if possible, more brutal and unreasoning, because an insane man killed the president of the United States. How the world does change!

During many years Ferney was a Mecca for the great and the learned of the world. Voltaire kept open house. He was bound to be active no matter what he thought or tried to do. He knew that constant activity was the only answer to the meaning of "life." As Voltaire put it, "Tranquillity is a beautiful thing, but boredom is of its acquaintance and family."

In his house in Ferney, he installed his niece, Madame Denis, or rather she installed herself. She was uncouth, talkative, and fond of pleasure. She loved to consort with the great, but bored everyone she met. She took possession of his house and life. Much of his company was due to her. Many of his activities were for her amusement and to keep her still; but she at least kept him busy and made him work. A constant stream of visitors poured into Ferney through all these years. He had some sixty servants, besides the other employes of the place, but these were kept busy looking after

travelers and friends. No one was denied admission, whether rich or poor, whether priest or pagan. All were housed and fed. When the hotels were closed at Geneva, the people went to Ferney, where they could get board and lodging free. Voltaire said that for fourteen years he was the innkeeper of Europe. Here he built his theatre and brought the greatest actors and actresses of the day, played himself, entertained his company and his friends and the constant stream of visitors who came from Geneva to see the plays. Even Madame Denis was kept from boredom by the life of Ferney.

In Geneva lived Jean Jacques Rousseau. He too was a rebel, mighty in war. Voltaire was keener, wittier, deeper, greater. Rousseau was more fiery, emotional, passionate. Both were really warriors in the same great cause. From their different places, three miles apart, both sent forth their thunderbolts to wake a sleeping world. When the world awakened and shook itself, churches, thrones, institutions, laws, and customs were buried in the wreck. Some charged the wreck to Voltaire, some to Rousseau.

These two men engaged in the same cause, fighting the same foes, could not agree. Rousseau joined with the clergy of Geneva in defaming Voltaire's theatre and his plays. Voltaire fought back with weapons keener than any Rousseau knew how to use. Two geniuses cannot possibly live so close together. In fact, the world itself is hardly big enough for two at the same time. As Wendell Phillips once said:

"No one hates a reformer as much as another reformer," and the war of these two men was long and bitter. It ended only with death, when both were brought to Paris and placed in the Pantheon, side by side, where they managed to stay in harmony until a frenzied religious mob sacked their tombs, burned them with quick-lime and visited the vengeance upon them when dead which they never could wreak before.

In making his improvements and overhauling the estate at Ferney, Voltaire built a new church. On the estate was one, dilapidated and old, which did not fit the new surroundings, and so long as he was to have a church, he wanted one that would ornament the place. He set to work about this, as he did at everything in life, vigorously and thoroughly. He would have a church that was a church and which would be as orthodox as any in Christendom.

For a long time he had been attending mass regularly every Sunday, taking with him his adopted child and the members of his household and setting a good example to the people on the estate. He would have a church as orthodox and as regular as Notre Dame, so he put himself in communication with the Pope and asked for a bull granting him absolute power over his churchyard, and for some sacred relics for the church. The request was granted and the Holy Father sent a piece of the hair shirt of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint. On the same day came a present of the portrait of Madame du Pompadour, and Voltaire re-

marked, "So, you see, I am all right both for this world and the next." He dedicated his church to "God alone" and was fond of saying that it was the only church in the universe that was dedicated to "God alone" and not to a saint. "For my part," he said, "I would rather build for the Master than for the servants." Then he designed for him a tomb attached to the church and jutting out from the wall. "The wicked will say," he remarked, "that I am neither inside nor out."

Later he shocked the holy people by going into the pulpit himself to preach. Not only did he have a church but he had a priest of his own who had lived with him at his house. An easy-going, companionable man, who cared for or paid little attention to religious matters. His name was Adam. For the most part, Father Adam's duties were to play chess with Voltaire, and when he wanted him for a game of chess he would call loudly to him, "Where art thou, Adam?"

He practically forced the priests to listen to his confession and bestow their benedictions upon him, but while he was toying with his own church, consorting with the priests, corresponding with the pope and attending mass, he was always forging his thunderbolts against the church.

For the last twenty-five years of his life, the superstition, the ignorance, and above all, the cruelty of the church, was constantly in his mind. He scarcely wrote a letter, a tract or book, that he did not revert to these over and over again, and in spite of all his contortions

and sumersaults, there probably cannot be found a line of Voltaire which defended superstition, gave countenance to cruelty or barbarism, and did not plead for the enlightenment and freedom of man.

His life at Ferney was one of constant work. All day he was busy with his books, his writings and his farm. The evening he gave up to the pleasures of society and to the Encyclopedia which was carried forward by the wisest men of France. Here he wrote volume after volume of his "Philosophical Dictionary," every page filled with subtle and deadly stabs at the church. Here he poured forth his pamphlets without number, sowing the seeds of revolution and revolt. "What harm can a book do that costs a hundred crowns," wrote Voltaire. "Twenty volumes folio will never make a revolution. It is the little pocket pamphlets of thirty sous that are to be feared." Here too he wrote his letters; letters to all kinds of people, especially scholars and rulers—letters more voluminous than ever came from the pen of any other correspondent in the world. Seven thousand of these have been preserved and printed and no one knows how many more are lost forever. These letters, like his pamphlets and his book, were ever urging tolerance, enlightenment, and the freedom of the mind.

Voltaire hated prisons and hated war. He was a bitter foe, but always quick and generous to forgive. With his servants on his place, he was generous and indulgent in the extreme. On one occasion two of the house servants robbed their master. The police discovered it and wer-

hot on their trail. Voltaire bade his secretary to see the servants and urge them to flee. "For if they are arrested," he said, "I shall not be able to save them from hanging." He gave them money for their journey and helped them in every way he could.

His many acts of humanity could not be recorded. His fight for Jean Calas is one of the most heroical of this or any other age. Calas was an old resident of Toulouse. Toulouse, like all the rest of France, was an intensely religious town. The priests and the state religion held full sway. Calas was a Protestant and a respected merchant of the place, all his family were Protestants, except one son, who had joined the Catholic Church. Another son, who like his father was a Protestant, decided to study law, but he could not be admitted to practice unless he joined the established church. He grew despondent and morose and hanged himself. He was discovered in a room of the house, dead, and hanging by the neck. His family and friends sought to conceal the act, as suicide in those days, as now, was a mortal crime. One should have nothing to say either about coming into the world or going out. A suicide's soul would go to hell, but at that time his body would be drawn and quartered and thrown to the dogs. Some one of the people, which means the mob, started the cry that the son was about to become a Catholic and the father had murdered him. This was taken up until the whole city was worked to a frenzy against the helpless old man and his family. The body of the dead was taken from the home and buried in state from

the cathedral with all the rites and ceremonies of the Catholic Church. Calas was arrested, tried, and of course condemned. He was old and feeble and could not have committed the deed even had there been any motive or desire. Of course there was no substantial evidence. Some one testified that a neighbor had told them that another neighbor had said that a peddler had seen Calas coming from the room where the son was hanged. Of course the peddler was not found, neither the one to whom he had talked.

In those days, hearsay evidence was a favorite kind. In two hundred years we have banished hearsay evidence from the courts of justice, and today it finds favor only with Madam Grundy, the strongest monarch in the world. Calas was doomed to torture and to death. His wrists were bound to an iron ring fastened to a stone post; his feet to another ring in the floor. They then turned the wheel until every joint in his arms and legs was dislocated. He was brought back to life, asked to confess, but he still refused. They contrived further tortures which still failed to bring a confession. The executioner then bound him to a wooden cross, broke his legs and arms with an iron bar and strangled him. Then they took his body, chained it to a stake and he was burned. His property was confiscated, his sons and daughters placed in Catholic institutions and the widow left to wander where she would.

This revolting affair was brought to the attention of Voltaire at Ferney. Calas was dead, but the system still lived. He took one of the

sons into his home, learned the facts, corresponded with all the notable people of Europe, industriously prepared the case, hired a lawyer and presented the case for review to the parliament of Paris. In this case he enlisted Frederick the Great, Catherine of Russia, and many other illustrious people throughout Europe. For six years his interest never flagged. Calas had been condemned by all the judges, excepting one. This man though a church man like the rest, would not consent. He joined with Voltaire to annul the findings of the court. After six years of constant battle, the parliament of Paris, by unanimous opinion decided that Calas was innocent of any crime. The estate was given back to the family and the children to their mother. Voltaire raised a large amount of money to take care of the family during the trial and to give them an estate after the vindication was complete.

No sooner was this case disposed of, than another equally horrible appealed to him for help. A boy nineteen years old named LaBare was charged, with several other boys, with having torn down a sacred crucifix. There was no evidence that he committed the heinous offense, but he did confess that he had sung some irreligious songs. LaBare was a reader of Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary; also of the great Diderot. This was enough. He was condemned to death. His tongue was pulled out with hot irons, his head cut off, his body thrown into the flames, together with the Philosophical Dictionary, which inspired the horrible deed. In the meantime, his com-

panions had fled to Voltaire. Voltaire took up the case, had the judgment reversed, LaBare's comrades saved and the name of the dead boy cleared of the "terrible" crime.

Many other cases almost as revolting were brought to Voltaire's attention and received his help. Of course in these cases the victim was dead, and it was easier to clear a dead victim than a live one. The most barbarous and ferocious of men and women begin to think and feel remorseful when the deed is done.

But the great battle of Voltaire for the memory of those tortured dead no doubt saved many other innocent men from the same cruel fate and went a long way toward ridding the world of the cruelty and barbarism of his age.

Voltaire no doubt realized that his long years of work were probably responsible for the charges of heresy lodged against many of the victims. They had believed what Voltaire had taught. He had written his Philosophical Dictionary full of mockery and profundity; it was audacious in the extreme and a deadly attack upon the superstition of his time. Surreptitiously he had brought it to Geneva and then denied its authorship. "If there is the least danger about it," said Voltaire, "please warn me and then I can disown it in all the public papers with my usual candor and innocence."

The world today, in court and out, acts upon the same reasoning as the judges in France at the time of Voltaire. Those who speak are often held responsible in court and out, for the revolutionary acts of men whom they never saw or of whom they never heard. It is cruel to

charge men criminally with the result of their words and thoughts. No doubt there is much immature talking and hasty writing and will always be where liberty of speech and press prevails. The political, religious, and social views of any age and even of the most radical members of society, were born, long before their time. Those who invented the alphabet and the printing press are indirectly responsible for much of the violence of a changing social state; but in the same way, they are responsible for the progress of the world, for the enlightenment, for the civilization, and for all that makes the present better than the past. Great changes never did and never can come unless accompanied by violence, by cruelty, by suffering and by pain. These are incident to the progress of the race; they are the labor pains that herald the birth of a new civilization and a better social life.

As Voltaire grew older, life flowed on with an easier current at Ferney. In this prosperous and industrious town, the huguenot and the Catholic, infidel and believer, worked and lived together in harmony and peace. He developed liberty and tolerance at home and all around him. He had there the practical realization of what was his dream for the human race.

All his life he was a child filled with sports and fancies, mixing with all the pleasures of the young. Ferney was crowded with a pleasure-loving, joyous throng. With all his other activities, he was a great match-maker. He said himself that he had brought about more than forty marriages, but he never made a

match for himself. All his life he was canny and sly.

He was urged by the Russian ruler to write a history of what Frederick the Great called "that barbarous land," but he early saw the possibility of that vast unexplored nation and the Russian force and genius that was behind it all. Catherine of Russia was one of his friends. She was philosophical, skeptical, industrious, cruel and cold, but she was awake to all the modern thought of the world. She believed in the philosophy of Voltaire and in the main used her genius to develop the future greatness of that new land. Catherine the Great was supposed to have killed her husband who was a weakling, that she might rule in his stead. Some of Voltaire's admirers objected to his intimacy with a woman of that type. "O," he said, "that bagetelle about a husband. Those are family affairs with which I do not mix myself."

Voltaire clearly saw the effects of the new intellectual life that was coming to the world. He knew what his years of toil would mean to France. The unnumbered pamphlets that had fallen over the land for sixty years, thick as the winter snow that falls from the clouds, he was certain would bear fruit. Not only what he had done, but what had been done by Rousseau and Diderot and the other writers and thinkers of his age, was bound at last permanently to affect the world. Then, too, the earth had grown tired of kings and princes who lived upon the unpaid labor of the poor. It had grown tired of the priests and super-

stitutions which covered the land with a pall of night. France was awakening. The day was dawning.

Only a few years before the thunderbolt of the French revolution burst with fire and sword upon the earth, he wrote: "Everything I see shows the signs of a revolution which must infallibly come. I shall not have the pleasure of beholding it. The French reach everything late, but they do reach it at last. Young people are lucky. They will see great things. I shall not cease to preach tolerance upon the house-tops until persecution is no more. The progress of the right is slow. The roots of prejudice deep. I shall never see the fruits of my efforts, but their seeds must one day germinate."

At Ferney, at the age of eighty-three, Voltaire wrote his last play, "Irene." This play was to be produced in the National Theatre at Paris. With this thought strongly in mind, a longing to see Paris once more began to overwhelm him. Madam Denis was anxious to go back; although she was growing old she yet longed for the chatter of the crowd. She urged Voltaire to go. All his friends urged him to go. "Paris," said Voltaire, "do you not know that there are forty thousand fanatics who would bring forty thousand fagots to burn me? That would be my bed of honor."

Louis XVI was then on the throne. He had most of the faults of the old king, but with these faults he was little short of an imbecile. He hated Voltaire. He knew what the works of Voltaire and Rousseau meant to the world.

"These two men have lost France," said the king. Still, he wanted to go. He would like to put "Irene"-on the stage himself, to be present at its rehearsal, to see to every detail of its production; so in February, 1778, he set out for Paris. The people of his little colony were heartbroken at his departure. Although he said he would return in six weeks, at the latest, they never expected to see his face again. His journey to Paris took five days. It was a royal procession that greeted the old man all the way from Ferney to the capital. Men, women, and children turned out at every town to do him honor. This man who had been in prison, repeatedly exiled and forbidden his city, was returning after twenty-eight years to the home of his birth.

He was the intellectual king of France, if not of the world. Morley calls Voltaire's last visit to Paris one of the "historic events of the century." The philosophers, dramatists, members of the Academy, and above all, the people stood around in crowds to worship at his shrine. Nobles and churchmen stood by sullen, insolent and ominous. He was denounced from the pulpit and called "Anti-Christ"; gladly would they have sent him once more to the bastille, but they did not dare. Full well they knew that it needed but a match to start a conflagration which would forever destroy the old regime. His rooms at the Hotel Villette were crowded with the intellectuals of the capital day after day. Here came Dr. Franklin presenting his grandson, a boy of seventeen. Voltaire raised his hand above the boy's head and

blessed him with the words' "God" and "Liberty." Literary men, actors, ambassadors were to do him honor. Madame Du Barry came from her place of banishment to see the intellectual king. Madame du Pompadour had grown old, and died, and Madame Du Barry had taken her place as the favorite courtesan, the most powerful of the women who ruled the court; but on the approach of the revolution she was banished to appease the crowd. All this was too much for old Voltaire. He fell ill and his friends feared for his life. The priest came to get a confession from Voltaire. His confession would be fame enough for any priest.

On February twenty-eighth, when he believed his last hour had come, in the presence of his secretary he wrote down his Confession of Faith: "I die adoring God, loving my friends, not hating my enemies, and detesting superstition." This was dated and signed, and is preserved in the National Library at Paris. For a few days he seemed to recover from his illness. While in bed he corrected his "Irene," added to it, and re-wrote it in part. He arranged for actors and superintended the details of its production. He summoned strength enough to go to the theatre.

Voltaire was always vain in his dress and personal appearance. He rode in a star-spangled coach, covered himself with a red coat lined with white ermine; he wore white stockings and silver buckles. He was small, lean and old. His nose, like a crow's beak, almost met his chin, but on his face was the everlasting smile. Through tumultuous crowds he

drove to the Academy where he was received with wild acclamation—the Academy which had repeatedly refused to make him a member, but which now worshiped his genius and popularity. He spoke to the members, outlined a project for making a dictionary of the French language, a dictionary which is today the foundation of all the dictionaries of Europe.

He went to the theatre to see his play. The building was crowded by a tumultuous, suffocating mob, representing all members of French society. Voltaire was hailed as a king. His bust was placed upon the stage; again and again they called for the old man to speak from the box. A laurel wreath was placed upon his head and the people went mad. When he left the theatre the crowds went with him, following his carriage with shouts, and praise, and tears, until the old man reached his room. Voltaire himself wept like a child: "If I had known the people would have committed such follies I would never have gone to the theatre."

For a few days he seemed to regain his strength. He bought a house in Paris and determined to stay, but in May another attack seized him. The priest came to see him. Some say he made a confession, some say he refused it. Whether he did or not is of small importance. What he did in his dying hours, has nothing to do with the life he lived. One must be judged by his life and not by the agonies of death.

The life of Voltaire was so active and long that there can be no question of what it meant. Then, too, Voltaire knew that to be buried in

consecrated ground, he must die with the benediction of the established church. All his life he had feared that he would be thrown in the gutter when dead. This was doubtless present in the old man's mind to the last. How he died it is impossible to tell. Some, that were with him, say he died in agony; some say he died in peace. The testimony of the witnesses depends largely upon their religious views. The papers were forbidden to notice his death, and the news was kept for a time from the people. On account of the testimony of the priest who said he had received absolution, and Voltaire's written confession of faith, he was accorded an honorable burial in consecrated ground at Romilly-on-Seine, 100 miles from Paris, the burial which all his life he desired. The next day a mandate was sent from the church forbidding that he be laid in consecrated ground, but he was already there.

Thirteen years later, by order of the National Assembly, which was then taking the first steps to overthrow the old regime and usher in the revolution, he was brought back to Paris. I cannot refrain from quoting here verbatim a short account of the return, written by that wonderful Englishwoman, Tallentyre, in her brilliant biography of Voltaire:

On July 6th, 1791, a funeral car, decked with laurels and oak leaves, drawn by four horses and escorted by a detachment of the National Guard, left Romilly-on-Seine and began its solemn triumphal progress to Paris. On the front of the car was written, "To the memory of Voltaire." On one side, "If man is born free, he ought to govern himself!" on the other, "If man has tyrants, he ought to dethrone them."

As it passed the villages, the people came out to greet it with wreaths of flowers and laurels in their hands. Mothers held up their babies that they, too, might say that they had seen this great day; old men pressed forward to touch and be healed. At night the villages through which the procession passed were illuminated; by day could be seen triumphal arches, girls dressed in white, and garlands of flowers. Out of their misery and wretchedness, the submerged poor recognized him who had wept and clamored for the right of all men and made freedom a possibility even for them.

At nightfall, on July 19th, the cortege reached Paris. The sarcophagus was placed on an altar on the ruins of that tower of the Bastille in which Voltaire had been twice a prisoner.

On the altar was the inscription, "On this spot, where despotism chained thee, receive the homage of a free people."

All Sunday night the sarcophagus remained there. At three o'clock on the sunny afternoon of Monday, July 11th, it was placed on a car designed by David and drawn through Paris, escorted by an enormous company organized, orderly, and representing every rank and condition. Here were the men who had demolished the Bastille, carrying its flag, and in their midst that terrible virago who had led them in the fray. Here were citizens with pikes, Swiss, Jacobins, actors and soldiers. Some carried banners with devices from the dead man's writings. Some dressed in Greek costume, carried a gilt model of the famous statue by Houdin. Among the self-constituted guard were many who, not a month before, had brought back that other king to this capital—from Varennes—with howls, insults and imprecations.

Singers and music preceded the car itself. Supported on four great wheels of bronze, it looked like a magnificent altar. On the summit was the sarcophagus, and on that a full-length figure of Voltaire, reclining in an attitude of sleep and with a winged Immortality placing a crown of stars on his head.

The procession itself consisted of a hundred thousand persons. Six hundred thousand more witnessed it. It first stopped at the Opera House. The operatic company came forward and sang that

song in Voltaire's "Samson," which became, with the "Marseillaise," the song of the Revolution:

"Wake ye people. Break your chains!"

After the Opera House, the Tuileries was passed. Every window was filled with spectators, save one. Behind that, closed and barred, sat the most unhappy of mortals, Louis and Marie Antoinette, awaiting doom.

At last, at ten o'clock at night, and in a drizzling rain, the Pantheon was reached.

The sarcophagus was lifted into the place designed for it near the tombs of Descartes and Mirabeau.

In the Pantheon he reposed in peace until 1814, after the Revolution was over and the Bourbons returned to power, the tombs of both Voltaire and Rousseau were broken open. They were removed in a sack at night, taken to a place outside the city, emptied into a pit and consumed with quick-lime. His ashes met the fate that he had dreaded all his life.

It is hardly necessary to sum up Voltaire. Born in a day of gross superstition, brutal barbarism, the densest bigotry and faith, he wrote his first play at the age of eighteen, and finished his last just before his death at eighty-four. During all this sixty-six years he worked unceasingly, dealing telling, deadly blows at the superstitions which held the minds of men. He died on the morning of the French revolution, a revolution which more than any other man Voltaire inspired. Had he lived a few years longer most likely Voltaire would have died on the guillotine with many other victims of that delirious spasm of liberty, that burned through France and prepared the soil for a civilization and tolerance far greater than the world had ever known.

Voltaire was small in stature, lean and spare of figure, and active in body. His nimble mind was ever ablaze during all his life. Valiantly he fought on every intellectual battlefield. True he bowed and dodged and lied over and over again, that he still might live and work. Many of his admirers cannot forgive this in the great Voltaire. Rather they would have had him, like Bruno and Servetus, remain steadfast to his faith while his living body was consumed with flames. But, Voltaire was Voltaire, Bruno was Bruno, and Servetus was Servetus. It is not for the world to judge, but to crown them all alike. Each and all lived out their own being, did their work in their own way, and carried a reluctant, stupid humanity to greater possibilities and grander heights. Voltaire was emotional and kind; with a loving heart, a sensitive body, and imaginative mind. Voltaire marks the closing of an epoch. His life and his work stand between the old and the new. When he was cold, superstition had not yet died, but had received its mortal wound. Never again can savagery control the minds and thoughts of men. Never again can the prison thumbscrews and the rack be instruments to save men's souls. Among the illustrious heroes who have banished this sort of cruelty from the Western world no other name will stand so high and shine so bright as the illustrious name

VOLTAIRE.

In the National Theatre of France stands the celebrated bust of Voltaire, the work of the great sculptor Houdin. He is little and lean and old. His skin is drawn closely over his bones. His chin and nose almost touch. A mocking sneer is on his lips and a cynic's grin upon his face. Copies and pictures of this bust have been scattered broadcast through the earth, and this is the Voltaire that the world has come to know. This is the Voltaire whose tireless hands and loving heart, and burning brain; whose sneering lips and cynic's smile will work and speak and mock and grin until the cruelty and superstition of the earth have forever fled.

NOTE—In the preparation of this address, I have drawn very freely on the biography of Voltaire written by S. S. Tallentyre, a brilliant Englishwoman. Perhaps I have drawn more freely on this book than one has the right to do, but it may create some interest in the subject, which will call for the reading of the book. Any one who feels enough interest in Voltaire to pursue his study, will find this one of the greatest biographies ever written.—C. S. D.

THE GOOD BRAHMIN

*Does Happiness Result From Ignorance
or From Knowledge?*

VOLTAIRE.

In my travels I once happened to meet with an aged Brahmin. This man had a great share of understanding and prudence, and was very learned. He was also very rich, and his riches added greatly to his popularity, for, wanting nothing that wealth could procure, he had no desire to defraud any one. His family was admirably managed by three handsome wives, who always studied to please him, and when he was weary of their society, he had recourse to the study of philosophy.

Not far from his house, which was handsome, well furnished, and embellished with delightful gardens, dwelt an old Indian woman who was a great bigot, ignorant, and withal very poor.

"I wish," said the Brahmin to me one day, "I had never been born."

"Why so?" said I.

"Because," said he, "I have been studying these forty years, and I find it has been so much time lost. While I teach others I know nothing myself. The sense of my condition is so humiliating, it makes all things so distasteful to me, that life has become a burden. I have been born, and I exist in time, without knowing what time is. I am placed, as our wise men say, in confines between two eternities, and yet I have no idea of eternity. I

am composed of matter, I think, but have never been able to satisfy myself what it is that produces thought. I even am ignorant whether my understanding is a simple faculty I possess, like that of walking and digesting, or if I think with my head in the same manner as I take hold of a thing with my hands. I am not only thus in the dark with relation to the principles of thought, but the principles of my motions are entirely unknown to me. I do not know why I exist, and yet I am applied to every day for a solution of the enigma. I must return an answer, but can say nothing satisfactory on the subject. I talk a great deal, and when I have done speaking remain confounded and ashamed of what I have said.

"I am in still greater perplexity when I am asked if Brahma was produced by Vishnu, or if they have both existed from eternity. God is my judge that I know nothing of the matter, as plainly appears by my answers. 'Reverend father,' says one, 'be pleased, to inform me how evil is spread over the face of the earth.' I am as much at a loss as those who ask the question. Sometimes I tell them that everything is for the best; but those who have the gout or the stone—those who have lost their fortunes or their limbs in wars—believe as little of this assertion as I do myself. I retire to my own house full of curiosity, and endeavor to enlighten my ignorance by consulting the writings of our ancient sages, but they only serve to bewilder me the more. When I talk with my brethren upon this subject, some tell me we ought to make the most of life and

laugh at the world. Others think they know something, and lose themselves in vain and chimerical hypotheses. Every effort I make to solve the mystery adds to the load I feel. Sometimes I am ready to fall into despair when I reflect that, after all my researches, I neither know from whence I came, what I am, whither I shall go, or what is to become of me."

The condition in which I saw this good man gave me real concern. No one could be more rational, no one more open and honest. It appeared to me that the force of his understanding and the sensibility of his heart were the causes of his misery.

The same day I had a conversation with the old woman, his neighbor. I asked her if she had ever been unhappy for not understanding how her soul was made? She did not even comprehend my question. She had not, for the briefest moment in her life, had a thought about these subjects with which the good Brahmin had so tormented himself. She believed from the bottom of her heart in the metamorphoses of her god, Vishnu, and, provided she could get some of the sacred water of the Ganges in which to make her ablutions, she thought herself the happiest of women.

Struck with the happiness of this poor creature, I returned to my philosopher, whom I thus addressed:

"Are you not ashamed to be thus miserable when, not fifty yards from you, there is an old automaton who thinks of nothing and lives contented?"

"You are right," he replied. "I have said to

myself a thousand times that I should be happy if I were but as ignorant as my old neighbor, and yet it is a happiness I do not desire."

This reply of the Brahmin made a greater impression on me than anything that had passed. I consulted my own heart and found that I myself should not wish to be happy on condition of being ignorant.

I submitted this matter to some philosophers, and they were all of my opinion; and yet, said I, there is something very contradictory in this manner of thinking, for, after all, what is the question? Is it not to be happy? What signifies it then whether we have understandings or whether we are fools? Besides, there is this to be said: those who are contented with their condition are sure of that content, while those who have the faculty of reasoning are not always sure of reasoning right. It is evident then, I continued, that we ought rather to wish not to have common sense, if that common sense contributes to our being either miserable or wicked.

They were all of my opinion, and yet not one of them could be found to accept of happiness on the terms of being ignorant. From hence I concluded that, although we may set a great value upon happiness, we set a still greater upon reason.

But after mature reflection upon this subject I still thought there was great madness in preferring reason to happiness. How is this contradiction to be explained? Like all other questions, a great deal may be said about it.

THE TWO COMFORTERS

VOLTAIRE.

The great philosopher Citosile once said to a woman who was disconsolate, and who had good reason to be so: "Marianne, the queen of England, daughter to Henry IV. was as wretched as you. She was banished from her kingdom, was in great danger of her life at sea, and saw her royal spouse expire on a scaffold."

"I am sorry for her," said the lady, and began to lament her own misfortunes.

"But," said Citosile, "remember the fate of Mary Stuart. She loved (but with most chaste and virtuous affection) an excellent musician, who played admirably on the bass-viol. Her husband killed her musician before her face; and in the sequel her good friend and relative, Queen Elizabeth, who called herself a virgin, caused her head to be cut off on a scaffold covered with black, after having confined her in prison for the space of eighteen years."

"That was very cruel," replied the lady, and presently relapsed into her former melancholy.

"Perhaps," said the comforter, "you have heard of the beautiful Joan of Naples, who was taken prisoner and strangled."

"I have a dim remembrance of her," said the afflicted lady.

"I must relate to you," continued the other, "the adventure of a sovereign princess who,

within my recollection, was dethroned after supper and who died on a desert island."

"I know her whole history," replied the lady.

"Well, then," said Citosile, "I will tell you what happened to another great princess whom I instructed in philosophy. She had a lover, as all great and beautiful princesses have. Her father surprised this lover in her company, and was so displeased with the young man's confused manner and excited countenance that he gave him one of the most terrible blows that had ever been given in his province. The lover seized a pair of tongs and broke the head of the angry parent, who was cured with great difficulty, and who still bears the marks of the wound. The lady in fright leaped out of the window and dislocated her foot, in consequence of which she habitually halts, though still possessed in other respects of a very handsome person. The lover was condemned to death for having broken the head of a great prince. You can imagine in what a deplorable condition the princess must have been when her lover was led to the gallows. I have seen her long ago when she was in prison, and she always spoke to me of her own misfortunes."

"And why will you not allow me to think of mine?" said the lady.

"Because," said the philosopher, "you ought not to think of them; and since so many great ladies have been so unfortunate, it ill becomes you to despair. Think of Hecuba—think of Niobe."

"Ah!" said the lady, "had I lived in their time, or in that of so many beautiful prin-

cesses, and had you endeavored to console them by a relation of my misfortunes, would they have listened to you, do you imagine?"

Next day the philosopher lost his only son, and was entirely prostrated with grief. The lady caused a catalogue to be drawn up of all the kings who had lost their children, and carried it to the philosopher. He read it—found it very exact—and wept nevertheless.

Three months afterwards they chanced to renew their acquaintance, and were mutually surprised to find each other in such a gay and sprightly humor. To commemorate this event, they caused to be erected a beautiful statue to Time, with this inscription: "*TO HIM WHO COMFORTS.*"

